

A SCRIPTURAL INSTRUCTION MANUAL

Book Nine

THE LORD'S SUPPER

AND CORPORATE UNITY

Worthy Participation, Covenant Proclamation, and the Conditions for Apostolic Power

*"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup,
ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."*

1 Corinthians 11:26

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul."

Acts 4:32

Established Upon the Authority of Holy Scripture

King James Version

Preface: The Gathered Church at Its Most Sacred

The Lord's Supper and corporate unity are not independent topics joined by convenience. They belong together because they both describe the gathered church at its most sacred — the moments when what the church is and what it believes are most fully enacted and most visibly at stake.

At the Lord's table, the church proclaims the Lord's death until he comes. The act is covenant proclamation, not merely memorial sentiment.

What the church does at the table reflects what the church actually believes about the body and blood of Jesus Christ, about the covenant established in that blood, and about the unworthiness that must be honestly confronted before approaching it.

In corporate unity, the church demonstrates or contradicts the prayer of Christ in John 17 — that they all may be one. The unity of the body is not a pastoral nicety. It is the condition under which the Spirit moves in apostolic power, and its absence is the explanation for the spiritual weakness that attends a divided, deceiving, or self-serving assembly.

Book Nine treats both subjects with the seriousness they deserve:

- Part One (Chapters One through Five): The Lord's Supper — its institution, its covenant meaning, the theology of the bread and the cup, the requirement of worthy participation, and the consequences of unworthiness.
- Part Two (Chapters Six through Nine): Corporate unity — the pattern of the early church, the prayer of Christ, what unity requires and what destroys it, and the Ananias and Sapphira account as the New Testament's most sobering case study in the cost of deception in the body.

Part One: The Lord's Supper

Chapter One: Institution — What Christ Did and Why

The Lord's Supper is not the church's invention. It is Christ's institution, delivered to the apostles on the night of his betrayal, received by them as a command, and passed on to the church with explicit instruction for its continuation. The church does not invent the Supper; it receives and delivers it.

1.1 The Institution in the Synoptic Gospels

Matthew 26:26--28

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Luke 22:19--20

"And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

Three features of Christ's institution demand careful attention:

1. The command: 'This do.' Luke's record preserves the imperative that Matthew and Mark do not emphasize. This is not an invitation to participate if the mood strikes; it is a command to the church to continue this act in perpetuity — 'in remembrance of me.'
2. The connection to the New Covenant: 'This cup is the new testament in my blood.' The Supper is explicitly tied to the New Covenant — the *diatheke* (διαθήκη) established in Christ's blood. To participate in the Lord's Supper is to proclaim one's participation in the covenant his blood enacted.
3. The purpose of the blood: 'shed for many for the remission of sins.' Matthew's record explicitly connects the cup to the remission of sins — the same *aphesin* (ἄφεσιν) of Acts 2:38. The Supper proclaims the same blood that baptism applies.

1.2 Paul's Apostolic Transmission

1 Corinthians 11:23--26

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

Paul's opening phrase is the doctrinal method of the entire manual stated in miniature: 'I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.' The Supper is received, not invented. It is transmitted, not improvised. The chain of custody is explicit: from the Lord, to Paul, to the churches, to every generation that follows.

Verse 26 provides the most complete definition of what the Supper is and does: 'ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.' The Greek *kataggello* (καταγγέλλω) — translated 'shew' — means to proclaim, to announce publicly, to declare with authority. This is not the language of private memory. The Lord's Supper is a public proclamation of the Lord's death enacted in physical elements before the gathered assembly. It is preaching without words.

Received and Delivered

The apostolic chain of custody: Christ instituted it on the night of his betrayal. The apostles received it. Paul received what they delivered. He delivered it to the churches. The churches deliver it to every generation. The Supper is not a tradition that evolved; it is a command that was transmitted. Every church that observes it stands in that unbroken chain of transmission from the upper room.

1.3 The Old Covenant Background

The Lord's Supper was instituted at the Passover meal. This is not incidental. Every feature of the Passover — the lamb slain, the blood applied, the memorial meal eaten in haste by a redeemed people — pointed forward to what Christ would accomplish. The night he instituted the Supper, he was himself the Passover lamb being handed over for slaughter.

1 Corinthians 5:7

"For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

Paul's identification of Christ as the Passover lamb is the interpretive key to the Supper's Old Covenant background. Israel ate the Passover in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt — the night the death angel passed over every household covered by the blood of the lamb. The church eats the Lord's Supper in remembrance of its deliverance from sin and death — the night the judgment of God passed over every soul covered by the blood of Christ. The continuity is exact: a lamb, a covenant, a blood covering, a memorial meal, a redeemed people.

The New Covenant's Supper does not merely resemble the Passover. It replaces it, fulfils it, and surpasses it. The Passover pointed to a temporal, national deliverance. The Lord's Supper proclaims an eternal, universal redemption. The blood of a lamb could cover. The blood of Christ removes.

Chapter Two: The Elements — Bread and Cup

The two elements of the Lord's Supper — the bread and the cup — are not interchangeable symbols whose physical form is irrelevant. They were chosen by Christ deliberately, from the Passover table, and each carries specific theological meaning that the church is to proclaim every time it gathers at the table.

2.1 The Bread: The Broken Body

1 Corinthians 11:24

"And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me."

The bread represents Christ's body — broken, given, offered. The action of breaking is integral to its meaning: the bread is not merely displayed but broken, as Christ's body was broken in crucifixion. The command 'take, eat' is an act of personal reception: the participant does not merely observe the bread but takes it into himself, enacting the reception of Christ's broken body as the sustenance of his own life.

Paul's description of the church as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27) gives the bread a corporate dimension as well. When the congregation eats together from the one bread, they are proclaiming their shared identity as members of the one body — distinct individuals made one by their common participation in the broken body of their Lord.

1 Corinthians 10:16--17

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

The Greek *koinonia* (κοινωνία) — translated 'communion' — means participation, fellowship, sharing in. The bread is not merely a symbol of Christ's body standing at a distance from it; it is the means of participation in his body. The Supper is a participation ordinance, not merely a memorial one. Something real is transacted at the table.

2.2 The Cup: The New Covenant in His Blood

Luke 22:20

"This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

Matthew 26:28

"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

The cup is explicitly identified with the New Covenant — the diatheke enacted in Christ's blood. Every time the church drinks the cup, it is publicly affirming its participation in the covenant established by his death. This is not sentiment; it is covenant language of the most binding kind.

Matthew's record adds the specific covenant benefit: remission of sins.

The cup proclaims the same blood that, when applied through baptism in Jesus' name, washes sins away. The Supper is not the application of that blood — baptism is the appointed moment of application — but it is the ongoing proclamation and remembrance of the blood that was shed and applied. The believer who comes to the table comes as one already washed, proclaiming the washing to the watching assembly and to the spiritual world.

2.3 What the Elements Are Not

The history of Christian theology has produced two major errors regarding the nature of the Supper's elements, one on either side of the scriptural position:

Transubstantiation

The Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation teaches that the bread and wine are literally transformed into the physical body and blood of Christ at the moment of consecration — that the substances change while the appearances remain. This doctrine requires a philosophical framework

(Aristotelian substance and accident) that is not derived from Scripture and was not held by the apostolic church. It also contradicts the complete, once-for-all nature of Christ's sacrifice: Hebrews 9:25--28 establishes that Christ was not offered often but once. A doctrine requiring his body to be re-offered at every mass conflicts with the finality the epistle to the Hebrews insists upon.

Bare Memorialism

On the opposite extreme, bare memorialism treats the elements as purely symbolic — mere visual aids to assist the memory in recalling a historical event, with no actual participation in Christ's body and blood occurring. This position cannot account for Paul's language of *koinonia* (participation) in 1 Corinthians 10:16, the severity of the consequences he attaches to unworthy participation (1 Corinthians 11:29--30), or the connection between the Supper and the covenant he draws in verse 25. A purely symbolic act cannot produce physical sickness and death among those who participate unworthily.

The Scriptural Position

The elements remain bread and cup. They do not transform into Christ's physical flesh and blood. But they are the appointed means of genuine covenantal participation in his body and blood — a real spiritual transaction enacted through physical elements, by which the believer proclaims, affirms, and participates in the covenant benefits secured by the cross. The elements are neither literalized flesh and blood nor empty symbols. They are covenant signs that accomplish what they represent: communion with Christ and proclamation of his death.

Chapter Three: Worthy Participation

Of all the warnings in Paul's letters, the warning about unworthy participation in the Lord's Supper is among the most severe. Physical sickness and death are explicitly named as consequences. The minister who

allows the table to be approached casually, without preparation or discernment, is not extending grace; he is permitting the conditions that Paul identifies as producing judgment.

3.1 The Warning and Its Grounds

1 Corinthians 11:27--30

"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

Paul's warning has four components, each of which deserves sustained attention:

4. Guilty of the body and blood of the Lord (verse 27). The Greek *enochos* (ἐνοχος) means liable, answerable, subject to judgment for. The person who participates unworthily does not merely miss a spiritual benefit; he incurs a debt — a specific liability for the body and blood of Christ. The language echoes the guilt of those who shed innocent blood. This is covenant violation of the most grave kind.
5. Self-examination required (verse 28). Paul's remedy is not to exclude the unworthy from the table by external gate-keeping alone; it is to require every participant to examine himself before approaching. The examination is the individual's own responsibility. The minister prepares the congregation to examine themselves; the congregation each examines themselves.
6. Not discerning the Lord's body (verse 29). The failure that makes participation unworthy is the failure to discern — to distinguish, to perceive the significance of — the Lord's body. This is both a Christological failure (not recognizing who is being proclaimed in the

elements) and an ecclesiological one (not recognizing the corporate body of believers who share the table).

7. Real physical consequences (verse 30). Many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. The Greek *koimao* (κοιμάω) — 'sleep' — is Paul's consistent euphemism for physical death (1 Corinthians 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thessalonians 4:14--15). He is saying that some in the Corinthian congregation have died as a result of unworthy participation. This is not hyperbole. It is the apostolic explanation of what had actually occurred.

Memorial Does Not Mean Inconsequential

The Supper is observed 'in remembrance of me.' Some have taken this to mean the Supper is a subjective act of personal recollection with no objective consequences. Paul's account of weak, sick, and dead Corinthians corrects this reading. A covenant act is never merely subjective. The covenant engaged at the Lord's table is the New Covenant in Christ's blood — the most serious covenantal reality in the universe. It does not become inconsequential because it is described as a remembrance.

3.2 What Unworthy Participation Looks Like

The Corinthian context reveals what Paul meant by unworthy participation. The church at Corinth had turned the Lord's Supper into a social occasion in which the wealthy ate their own food and became drunk while the poor went hungry (1 Corinthians 11:20--22). The physical divisions of the Corinthian social hierarchy were being enacted at the Lord's table — the exact opposite of the corporate unity the Supper proclaims.

But unworthy participation is not limited to social division. Paul's broader description points to several categories of unworthiness:

- Unresolved, unconfessed sin: the believer who approaches the table with unaddressed sin — known, unrepented, and unconfessed — participates

in the covenant proclamation of Christ's blood while living in violation of the covenant that blood established.

- Contempt for the covenant body: the person who despises, dismisses, or actively harms fellow members of the body of Christ — and then participates with them at the table as though nothing is wrong — is not discerning the Lord's body in the ecclesiological sense.
- Ignorance or indifference to what is being proclaimed: the participant who approaches the table with no understanding of or engagement with what the bread and cup represent has not examined himself and is not discerning the Lord's body in the Christological sense.
- Those under formal church discipline: 1 Corinthians 5:11 instructs the church not to eat with a person who bears the name of a brother while living in unrepentant immorality. The Lord's table excludes those who have been formally separated from the covenant community through the Matthew 18 process until they repent and are restored.

3.3 How to Approach the Table Worthily

Worthy participation does not require sinless perfection — no one would ever be able to approach. It requires honest self-examination, genuine repentance of known sin, and the discernment that recognizes both what the elements proclaim and who shares the table.

1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The pathway to worthy participation is always open through confession and repentance. The believer who has sinned, who examines himself and finds sin, who confesses it to God and turns from it — that believer has done exactly what Paul's instruction prescribes and may approach the table in the confidence of 1 John 1:9. Worthy participation does not require the absence of a sinful past; it requires the presence of a repentant heart.

The minister's responsibility in preparing the congregation for the Supper is to create the conditions for honest self-examination: to explain what the table is and what it proclaims, to call the congregation to silent reflection and confession before the elements are distributed, and to make clear both the privilege and the weight of what they are about to do. A congregation that approaches the Lord's table casually has not been prepared by its shepherd; it has been abandoned by him at the most sacred moment of the corporate gathering.

3.4 A Gathered-Church Ordinance

1 Corinthians 11:33

"Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another."

Paul's instruction to 'tarry one for another' — to wait for each other before eating — establishes the Lord's Supper as a gathered-church ordinance. It is not for the isolated individual eating alone. It is not for small groups or households apart from the assembled congregation. It is for the gathered body, assembled together, proclaiming the Lord's death together.

The corporate nature of the Supper is not merely practical; it is theological. The Supper proclaims that the many are one body, that they share one table, that they participate in one covenant. That proclamation requires the gathered body to make it. An individual eating bread and drinking grape juice alone in their living room is not observing the Lord's Supper in the apostolic sense, regardless of how sincerely they intend it.

Chapter Four: Frequency and Administration

4.1 'As Often As' — What Scripture Requires

1 Corinthians 11:25--26

"This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

The phrase 'as often as' establishes frequency without specifying an exact interval. Scripture does not mandate daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly observance. The early church appears to have observed the Supper with significant frequency — Acts 2:42 identifies 'breaking of bread' as one of the four core practices of the Jerusalem church, and Acts 20:7 records a gathering on the first day of the week specifically for the breaking of bread — but neither passage provides a binding command for a particular frequency.

What the phrase 'as often as' does establish is that the Supper's observance is to be regular and recurring. It is not a once-a-year rite or an occasional optional addition to the worship service. It is a standing practice of the gathered church, recurring with sufficient frequency that it shapes the rhythmic life of the assembly. The congregation that observes the Supper rarely has not been taught to understand what Paul says the Supper does: proclaim the Lord's death till he comes.

4.2 Who Administers

Scripture does not specify a particular office as exclusively authorized to administer the Lord's Supper. The institution accounts record Christ himself distributing the elements. Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 11 address the congregation's conduct at the Supper without designating a specific administering officer. The consistent New Testament pattern is that the Supper is administered within the ordered life of the local assembly under the oversight of its elders — but no single text restricts administration to a specific ordained office.

The apostolic principle governing administration is the same principle governing all assembly practices: decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40), under the authority of the gathered church's recognized leadership, in a manner consistent with the solemnity of what is being proclaimed.

4.3 The Elements Used

Christ used unleavened bread (the Passover was observed with unleavened bread by command — Exodus 12:15) and the cup of the vine at the institution. The early church continued to use bread and the fruit of the vine. Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 11 presuppose the same elements.

Whether fermented wine or unfermented grape juice is required is a question on which Scripture is not explicit. The Greek oinos (οἶνος) can refer to either. The principle governing the question is Paul's warning against drunkenness at the Supper (1 Corinthians 11:21) and the broader New Testament caution about wine's potential for excess. Many assemblies use unfermented grape juice on the basis of these principles without departing from the scriptural pattern. The theological weight of the Supper does not rest on the fermentation state of the cup but on what the cup proclaims: the new covenant in Christ's blood.

Chapter Five: Objections on the Lord's Supper

5.1 'The Supper Is Just a Symbol — It Has No Real Consequence'

OBJECTION:

"The Lord's Supper is a memorial act of remembrance. The elements are symbols. There is nothing objectively happening at the table that could cause sickness or death."

ANSWER: The Corinthian congregation's dead and sick are Paul's answer. He does not speculate about whether unworthy participation might have consequences; he states that it has had them. The Supper is a covenant act — and covenant acts, in the Scripture's consistent testimony, carry real weight. The covenant of circumcision carried the death penalty for noncompliance (Genesis 17:14). The Passover carried real judgment for those whose households were not covered by

blood. The Lord's Supper proclaims a greater covenant. Its consequences for violation are no less real.

5.2 'Anyone Who Wants to Should Be Welcome at the Table'

OBJECTION:

"The Lord's table is open to all. It is inhospitable and exclusionary to refuse anyone who comes forward."

ANSWER: The hospitality of God's house and the specific requirements for approaching God's table are not the same thing. The New Testament's consistent teaching is that the Supper is for the covenant community — those who have repented, been baptized in Jesus' name, and received the Holy Ghost. The person who has not entered the covenant has not yet been placed within it through the appointed means, and the table is the proclamation of a covenant they have not yet received.

Furthermore, Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 11:27--30 makes open communion dangerous to the unprepared participant, not merely doctrinally irregular. A minister who welcomes to the table those who have not examined themselves, who are not discerning the Lord's body, and who have not entered the covenant — is exposing them to the judgment Paul warns against. This is not hospitality. It is negligence dressed as grace.

5.3 'The Bread Literally Becomes Christ's Body'

OBJECTION:

"Christ said 'this is my body.' These are his words. We must take them literally."

ANSWER: The principle of literal interpretation must be applied consistently. Christ said 'I am the door' (John 10:9), 'I

am the vine' (John 15:1), 'I am the bread of life' (John 6:35). Literal interpretation of these statements would require a wooden door, a literal grapevine, and literal bread in the chest cavity. The figurative use of 'is' to mean 'represents' or 'signifies' is common in Scripture and in natural language. At the Last Supper, the bread was visibly still bread in Christ's hands when he said 'this is my body.' His disciples understood him to be identifying the bread as the covenantal representation of his body, not declaring a metaphysical transformation before their eyes.

The decisive scriptural argument against transubstantiation is Hebrews 9:25--28: Christ was not offered often, as the high priest enters every year, but once for all. A doctrine requiring the literal re-offering of Christ's body at every mass directly contradicts the once-for-all finality the epistle to the Hebrews establishes as the definitive superiority of Christ's sacrifice over every repeated Old Covenant offering.

Part Two: Corporate Unity

Chapter Six: The Pattern of the Early Church

The unity of the early church in Acts is not a nostalgic ideal to be admired from a distance. It is the documented reality of what the apostolic church looked like when it was operating under the Spirit's full power, and it is therefore the standard against which every subsequent congregation must measure itself.

6.1 One Heart and One Soul

Acts 4:32

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."

The phrase 'one heart and one soul' — kardia kai psyche mia (καρδία και ψυχή μία) — is the New Testament's most complete expression of corporate unity. It is not merely agreement on doctrine, nor merely shared practices of worship. It is a unity of the whole inner life — the desires, the orientation, the fundamental direction of both the affective center (heart) and the animating self (soul). The congregation that is one heart and one soul does not require external enforcement of unity; its unity flows from a common devotion to a common Lord who has genuinely transformed every member from within.

The practical expression in Acts 4:32 is economic: no one claimed personal ownership, all things were held in common. This is not a mandate for Christian communism; it is a description of what genuine spiritual unity produces in practice. When the heart is fully oriented toward God and toward the brethren, the grip on personal possessions loosens. The giving described in Acts 2:44--45 and Acts 4:34--35 was voluntary, motivated by love — not compelled by institutional requirement. It was the fruit of the Spirit's unity at work in individual hearts.

6.2 The Four Core Practices

Acts 2:42

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

The Jerusalem church's unity was not unstructured. It was rooted in four specific, ordered practices. Each of these practices is both an expression and a means of corporate unity:

- The apostles' doctrine — a common doctrinal foundation that every member shared and that defined the community's identity. Unity without

shared doctrine is sentiment, not covenant. The Jerusalem church was one heart and one soul because it was one mind about the apostolic teaching.

- Fellowship (koinonia — κοινωνία) — the shared life of mutual participation, care, and accountability. Fellowship in the New Testament sense is not sociability; it is the deliberate practice of bearing one another's burdens, sharing one another's joys and sorrows, and holding one another accountable to the covenant walk.
- Breaking of bread — the Lord's Supper, observed regularly as the covenant proclamation that bound the community to its Lord and to each other. The table creates unity by proclaiming the one body constituted by the one sacrifice.
- Prayers — corporate prayer as the community's sustained dependence on God together. The unity of one accord prayer — homothumadon (ὁμοθυμαδόν) — is the atmosphere in which the Spirit moves in apostolic power.

6.3 One Accord: The Atmosphere of Apostolic Power

The Greek word homothumadon — translated 'with one accord' or 'with one mind' — appears eleven times in the book of Acts. It is the consistent descriptor of the early church in its most spiritually powerful moments:

- Acts 1:14 — 'These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication' — the 120 waiting for Pentecost.
- Acts 2:1 — 'They were all with one accord in one place' — the moment the Spirit fell.
- Acts 2:46 — 'They continuing daily with one accord in the temple.'
- Acts 4:24 — 'They lifted up their voice to God with one accord' — the prayer that preceded the shaking of the place and the fresh filling of the Spirit.
- Acts 5:12 — 'They were all with one accord in Solomon's porch' — in the context of signs and wonders being done among the people. The pattern is unmistakable: one accord is the condition under which the Spirit moves in apostolic power. It is not sufficient to be in the same building. It

is not sufficient to be singing the same songs. One accord is a unity of heart, mind, and purpose that removes the obstacles to the Spirit's unhindered movement. The congregation that is fragmented by unresolved conflict, operating under deception, divided by personal ambition, or tolerating ongoing sin in its members has forfeited the conditions for the apostolic power the early church experienced.

Chapter Seven: The Prayer of Christ — Unity as Evangelistic Necessity

7.1 John 17: The High Priestly Prayer

John 17:20--23

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

Christ's high priestly prayer in John 17 is the most theologically profound statement about Christian unity in the New Testament. Four dimensions of this prayer demand attention:

8. The scope: Christ prays not only for the eleven apostles but for 'them also which shall believe on me through their word' — every generation of believers from Pentecost to the return of Christ. This prayer is for us, now, as much as for the Jerusalem church.
9. The standard: 'as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee.' The standard of Christian unity is the unity of the Father and Son — the most perfect unity conceivable, a unity of nature, will, and purpose between two persons who are, in the Oneness understanding of Book Two, the one

God in two modes of self-revelation. Human unity will never reach that standard in this age, but it is the direction toward which the Spirit's work in the body consistently moves.

10. The means: 'that they may be one in us.' The unity of believers is not produced by human agreement or organizational structure. It is a participation in the unity of the Father and the Son — derived from the same Spirit indwelling each member and orienting each toward the same Lord.
11. The purpose: 'that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.' The unity of the church is the church's most powerful evangelistic instrument. A divided church is a muted witness. The world does not need to see Christians agreeing on every secondary matter; it needs to see Christians who genuinely love one another across every human division, whose unity cannot be explained by natural affinity or cultural similarity, whose oneness points beyond itself to the God who produces it.

7.2 Unity Is Not Uniformity

The unity Christ prays for is not the uniformity of a congregation in which every member is identical in personality, background, gift, or preference. The body of Christ is described in 1 Corinthians 12 precisely in terms of its diversity: many members, different gifts, different functions, all necessary to the whole. The eye is not the hand; the ear is not the foot; but all are one body.

Unity is the shared orientation of diverse members toward one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:4-6). It does not eliminate difference; it transcends it. The congregation that mistakes enforced uniformity for spiritual unity has not achieved what Christ prayed for; it has merely suppressed the diversity the Spirit's own distribution of gifts was intended to produce.

Ephesians 4:3

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Paul's instruction is to keep the unity of the Spirit — not to create it. The Spirit's unity already exists among genuinely converted, Spirit-filled believers who share the one foundation. The work of the congregation is to maintain what the Spirit has produced — to protect it from the threats that erode it, to repair it where it has been damaged, and to keep the bond of peace through which it is expressed. **Chapter Eight: What Destroys Unity — Ananias, Sapphira, and the Cost of Deception** The sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 is one of the most jarring passages in the New Testament. Its placement immediately after the description of the early church's unity and generosity in Acts 4 is not incidental. The author of Acts intends the juxtaposition: the same community that was one heart and one soul, the same community that gave so generously that there was no lack among them, is the community in which two members concealed a portion of their property while claiming to give it all, and died for it.

8.1 The Account

Acts 5:1--5

"But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost."

Peter's diagnosis is precise: Ananias lied to the Holy Ghost. The lie was not about money; it was about the condition of the heart. Ananias and Sapphira wanted the community's honor for full generosity while retaining the security of partial retention. They presented a false account of their inner

reality to God's community. The Spirit, fully present in that community, was not deceived — and the God who cannot be mocked did not overlook it.

Peter's statement — 'was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?' — is critical. The sin was not the retention of part of the proceeds. The sin was the lie about it. Ananias could have kept all of it, given part while honestly saying he was giving part, or given all. The deception — the presentation of a partial gift as though it were total, to maintain a reputation the heart had not earned — was what God judged.

8.2 What the Account Teaches About Unity

The Ananias and Sapphira account teaches five things about the conditions for genuine corporate unity:

12. Deception is incompatible with the Spirit's presence. A community in which members present false accounts of their inner reality to God and to each other has forfeited the conditions for apostolic power. The Spirit who searches the hearts (Romans 8:27) is not deceived by the performance of spiritual generosity. He knows the heart's actual condition.
13. Financial deception is spiritual deception. The lie Ananias and Sapphira told was about money — but Peter identifies it as a lie to the Holy Ghost, not merely a misrepresentation to the community. The use of material resources is a spiritual matter in the New Testament. How a person handles money reveals what their heart is actually devoted to.
14. Corporate integrity requires individual honesty. The unity of one heart and one soul is only as genuine as the honesty of each individual heart and soul that composes it. A community cannot be truly united if its individual members are concealing what they actually believe, what they have actually done, or what they actually intend.
15. The gravity of pretense in the covenant community. Ananias and Sapphira were not outsiders pretending to be members; they were members pretending to be more devoted than they were. The pretense of covenant faithfulness within the covenant community is a specific and

serious offense — more serious, in God's assessment, than honest admission of the heart's actual condition.

16. Great fear followed great accountability. Acts 5:11 records that 'great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.' The fear was not terror that God might randomly strike anyone; it was the holy reverence that comes from understanding that God is genuinely present in the assembly, that the Spirit genuinely knows the heart, and that the covenant community is not a social gathering where performance is all that matters.

8.3 The Modern Application

Ephesians 4:25

"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another."

Paul's instruction in Ephesians 4:25 grounds the command for corporate honesty in the body's organic unity: 'for we are members one of another.' The lie told within the body harms the body. When a member deceives — about their spiritual condition, their financial dealings, their conduct, their true motives — they introduce a corruption into the whole that the whole will eventually manifest in weakened unity, absent power, and spiritual death.

The pastoral implication is not that every member must confess every private sin to the congregation. It is that the culture of the assembly must be one in which honesty is possible and expected — where a member who is struggling can say so without the pretense that everything is fine, where a leader who has failed can acknowledge it without the performance of infallibility, where the gap between how things appear in the assembly and how they actually are in the members' lives is as small as the Spirit's sanctifying work can make it.

Ephesians 4:30

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

The Spirit can be grieved. He is not an impersonal force that simply empowers whatever the church does. He is a person who responds to the moral and relational condition of the community he indwells. Deception grieves him. Unresolved conflict grieves him. Bitterness, malice, and the performance of unity without its substance grieve him. The community that grieves the Spirit has not lost his presence — he remains as the seal of every genuine believer — but it has lost the conditions under which he moves in apostolic power.

Chapter Nine: Technical Reference and Study Guide

9.1 Greek Terms

Diatheke (διαθήκη) — covenant, testament — the New Covenant established in Christ's blood; used of the cup in Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25

Kataggello (καταγγέλλω) — to proclaim, to declare publicly — used in 1 Corinthians 11:26 for what the Supper does: shews (proclaims) the Lord's death till he come

Koinonia (κοινωνία) — communion, fellowship, participation, sharing in — used in 1 Corinthians 10:16 for the Supper as communion of the body and blood of Christ; used in Acts 2:42 for the fellowship of the early church

Enochos (ἐνοχος) — guilty of, liable for, answerable to — used in 1 Corinthians 11:27 for the one who participates unworthily; a legal/covenantal term of accountability

Koimao (κοιμάω) — to sleep — Paul's consistent euphemism for physical death; used in 1 Corinthians 11:30 for those who died as a result of unworthy participation

Homothumadon (ὁμοθυμαδόν) — with one accord, with one mind — from homos (same) and thumos (passion, desire); used eleven times in Acts as the descriptor of the church in its most powerful moments

Kardia kai psyche mia (καρδιά καὶ ψυχὴ μία) — one heart and one soul — Acts 4:32; the New Testament's fullest expression of corporate unity, encompassing both the affective center and the animating self

Oinos (οἶνος) — wine, fruit of the vine — the Greek word used for the cup element; can refer to fermented or unfermented grape product

Allos (ἄλλος) in covenantal context — another of the same kind — the cup of the new testament is allos, another covenant of the same covenantal God, fulfilling and surpassing what came before

9.2 The Lord's Supper: Old and New Covenant Parallels

The Passover → The Lord's Supper

- The lamb slain → Christ our Passover sacrificed (1 Corinthians 5:7)
- Blood applied to the doorpost → Blood of Christ applied at baptism in Jesus' name (Acts 22:16)
- Death angel passed over blood-covered households → Judgment passed over those covered by Christ's blood
- Memorial meal eaten together → Lord's Supper eaten together in the gathered church
- Covenantal identity of Israel as God's people → Covenantal identity of the church as Christ's body
- Observed annually (Passover) → Observed regularly ('as often as' — 1 Corinthians 11:26)

9.3 Study Guide

Chapter One — Institution

17. What three features of Christ's institution of the Supper (Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20) establish it as a covenant ordinance rather than a memorial sentiment?
18. What does Paul mean by 'I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you' (1 Corinthians 11:23)? What does the chain of custody he describes tell us about the nature of apostolic tradition?
19. How does 1 Corinthians 5:7 ('Christ our passover is sacrificed for us') illuminate the Old Covenant background of the Lord's Supper?
20. (Advanced) Matthew 26:28 connects the cup to the 'remission of sins' — the same aphesis of Acts 2:38. What is the relationship between what baptism applies and what the Supper proclaims? How do the two ordinances complement rather than duplicate each other?

Chapter Two — The Elements

21. What does koinonia mean? How does Paul's use of it in 1 Corinthians 10:16 go beyond a purely memorial understanding of the Supper?
22. What is transubstantiation? What is the decisive scriptural argument against it from Hebrews 9:25-28?
23. What is bare memorialism? Why does 1 Corinthians 11:29-30 make it difficult to sustain?
24. (Advanced) Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:17 that the many are one bread and one body because they partake of the one bread. What does this corporate dimension of the bread tell us about the relationship between the Lord's Supper and the church's unity?

Chapter Three — Worthy Participation

25. What four components of Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 11:27-30 are identified in this chapter? Explain each in your own words.
26. What specific conditions in the Corinthian church had produced unworthy participation (1 Corinthians 11:20-22)? What principle do they illustrate about the relationship between social conduct and sacramental practice?
27. How does 1 John 1:9 describe the pathway to worthy participation? What does it tell us about the kind of past the table requires?
28. (Advanced) Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:29 that the judgment on the unworthy participant comes from 'not discerning the Lord's body.' Some commentators read 'the Lord's body' as referring to Christ's physical body in the elements; others read it as referring to the corporate body of the church. Which reading does the context (verses 20-22) favor, and why might both be true simultaneously?

Chapter Four — Frequency and Administration

29. Scripture says 'as often as ye eat this bread.' What does this phrase establish about frequency? What does it not specify? What do Acts 2:42 and Acts 20:7 suggest about early church practice?
30. Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 11 address the congregation's conduct but do not designate a specific administering officer. What principle from 1 Corinthians 14:40 governs administration? Under whose oversight is the Supper administered in the New Testament pattern?
31. Christ used unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. The Greek *oinos* can refer to fermented or unfermented grape juice. What principle governs the fermentation question? On what does the theological weight of the cup actually rest?
32. (Advanced) Why is the Supper described as a standing practice rather than an occasional rite? What does infrequent observance reveal about

whether a congregation has been taught what Paul says the Supper does?

Chapter Five — Objections on the Lord's Supper

33. The 'just a symbol' objection claims no real consequence attaches to unworthy participation. What does Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 11:30 say? What parallel from covenant history (Genesis 17:14; Exodus 12) establishes that covenant acts carry real weight?
34. The open communion objection says the table should be open to all. What is the distinction between the hospitality of God's house and the requirements for approaching the table? Why does Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 11:27-30 make open communion dangerous rather than merely doctrinally irregular?
35. State the transubstantiation objection. What three figurative 'I am' statements of Christ demonstrate that a literal reading of 'this is my body' cannot stand alone? What does Hebrews 9:25-28 establish that directly contradicts any doctrine of repeated offering?

Chapter Six — The Pattern of the Early Church

36. What does the Greek word *homothumadon* mean? Where does it appear in Acts in relation to the Spirit's most powerful movements?
37. What are the four core practices of Acts 2:42? How does each one contribute to corporate unity?
38. The generosity of Acts 4:32-35 was voluntary, not compelled. What does this tell us about the relationship between spiritual unity and practical care for one another?
39. (Advanced) Acts 4:32 describes a unity of 'heart and soul.' How does the distinction between *kardia* (heart) and *psyche* (soul) enrich the description of the early church's unity beyond mere doctrinal agreement?

Chapter Seven — The Prayer of Christ

40. Christ's prayer for unity in John 17 is grounded in the unity of the Father and Son. What standard does this set for the church's unity? Is it achievable in this age?
41. What is the evangelistic purpose of Christian unity according to John 17:21? What does a divided church communicate to the watching world?
42. Ephesians 4:3 says to 'endeavour to keep' the unity of the Spirit. What does the word 'keep' tell us about where the unity originates and what the church's role is in relation to it?
43. (Advanced) John 17:22 says Christ has given the church the same glory the Father gave him, so that they may be one as the Father and Son are one. What is the glory Christ has given the church, and how does it function as the basis of unity?

Chapter Eight — Ananias and Sapphira

44. Peter says Ananias lied to the Holy Ghost, not to men. What does this tell us about the nature of the Spirit's presence in the apostolic assembly?
45. Peter also says the property was Ananias's own to do with as he chose. What was the actual sin, and why is the distinction important?
46. What five things does the Ananias and Sapphira account teach about corporate unity?
47. (Advanced) Acts 5:11 says great fear came upon the whole church. What is the proper nature of this fear? How does it differ from the destructive anxiety that Book Seven warned against, and how does it serve the health of the covenant community?

A Closing Word: The Table and the Body

Every time the church gathers at the Lord's table, two realities are proclaimed simultaneously. The first is backward-looking: the Lord's death, accomplished once for all on a Roman cross outside Jerusalem, the blood of the New Covenant poured out for the remission of sins. The second is

forward-looking: till he come — the declaration that the One who died and rose again is coming again, and that the church that proclaims his death is the community waiting for his return.

Between that death and that return, the church lives. And the conditions under which it lives with power, with credibility, with the Spirit's unhindered movement, are the conditions the early church demonstrated: one accord, one heart, one soul, one doctrine, one table, one Lord. A community in which there is no pretense before God, no deception of the brethren, no contempt for the covenant that binds them, no approach to the table without discernment and examination.

The table is where all of this becomes most visible. When the congregation gathers at the Lord's table, the state of its unity, the honesty of its self-examination, the reality of its covenant walk — all of these are either proclaimed or contradicted by what happens there. The church that comes to the table with one heart and one soul, with examined and repentant hearts, discerning the Lord's body and the body of believers who share it — that church proclaims the Lord's death in the fullest possible sense.

Examine yourself. Discern the body. Come to the table worthy. And come together.

1 Corinthians 11:26

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

Continue to Book Ten:

Biblical Marriage and Family Order